

The Builder.

No. CCCCLXI.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1851.



FROM all quarters materials are being thrown into the cauldron out of which is to come, ultimately, a fine, healthy, and convenient London:—

"Mingle, mingle, mingle,
You that mingle may."

Projects for new bridges, new streets, new buildings, new parks, new railways have been thrown into the pot, will stew their time, and get out as best they can.

"Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire, burn; and, cauldron, bubble."

Westminster-bridge seems at last in a fair way of being mended with a new one: at all events, the plans have been deposited, and notice has been given of the intention of the Commissioners of Works to apply for an Act in the next session of Parliament, to enable them to proceed with the works. The plans deposited, made, as we stated last week, by Mr. Hardwick, have reference merely to the property required to be taken. The bridge is not yet designed, but we are able to indicate pretty accurately the nature of the structure, from what we believe will be the report of the Commission appointed in 1851 to consider "the best and most convenient site for a new bridge at Westminster, and, at the same time, what will be the best mode of construction with reference both to the traffic over it and to the purposes of navigation."

The report has not yet been presented to Parliament, but we can give what we believe will be the recommendations contained in it. It will be remembered that this subject has already occupied the attention of three committees of the House of Commons, namely, in 1844, 1846, and 1850, and that the last of these advised the erection of a temporary bridge, and an inquiry into the best mode of building another. The present commissioners recommend that the old structure should be used as a temporary bridge, and that a new bridge should be constructed adjoining, or as near as possible to the present bridge on the north side, that is, lower down the river; that it should not be less than 60 feet in width including the footways; that the height of headway of the centre arch should not be less than 25 feet 6 inches above Trinity datum; that it should consist of no more than five arches; and that it should be an iron structure resting on stone piers, as this would require less rise than a stone bridge, admit of a greater span of arch, and throw less pressure on the foundations.

With respect to the height and width, Mr. Barry, in his evidence, stated, as indispensable conditions if the bridge were to remain where it now is, that the roadway should be level from shore to shore; that the width of the roadway should be not less than 100 feet, and that the height of the road should not exceed 20 feet above Trinity standard. These conditions of course had reference to the effect of the New Houses of Parliament, and the commissioners admitted their importance in that

respect; but, considering that a bridge of this limited height and extended width would prove an obstacle to the passage of vessels, they have not adopted them. We may state as data, that the width of London-bridge is 54 feet, Blackfriars-bridge 42 feet, Waterloo-bridge 43 feet, and Vauxhall-bridge 36 feet. The height of headway under the same bridges, in the same order, is,—29 feet 6 inches, 27 feet 6 inches, 27 feet 6 inches, and 26 feet.

A bridge of the width proposed by Mr. Barry would be a fine feature as well as great convenience, and it should be considered, whether or not it might be obtained, or, at all events, approximated, without increasing the obstruction in the river, by means of overhanging footpaths carried by cantilevers or balance girders.

The property scheduled to come down includes the houses on the south side of Bridge-street, extending as far as the India Board, and then returns into Parliament-street. On the Surrey side the houses now standing on both sides of Bridge-road are taken as far as Belvedere-road on the north side, and Stangate on the south side, and a few houses on the east side of Belvedere-road, at the corner of Bridge-road.

For Mr. Charles Pearson's scheme for effecting a junction between the centre of the City and the several railways north of the Thames, plans have been deposited preparatory to an application to Parliament for powers. This has been done, as we understand, not by the City authorities, as stated elsewhere, but by Mr. Pearson himself, pending an examination into the cost and practicability of the scheme, on the part of the City, by Mr. Jas. Walker, Mr. Higgins, and the City architect.

On Friday evening last week, Mr. Pearson laid his scheme before the members of the Institute of Architects, invited by him for that purpose. On that occasion the projector drew a very striking, we may say astounding, picture of London city, with its coal trade, corn trade, banks, Stock Exchange, markets, India House, and other immense establishments, and showed the enormous interests centred in the 620 acres which form it, and contain a fixed property, the assessable value of which is a million and a quarter per annum. The worth of the movable property he called a hundred millions. Aided by Mr. Stevens, who has for some years been working out the plan with him, Mr. Pearson explained the course of the proposed lines of railway, to be constructed in a subway beneath a street 100 feet wide (less straight than is desirable) from Farringdon-street to King's-cross, with branch lines to passenger-stations, passing under Holborn-hill and Skinner-street.

We have long said, without reference to this or any precise scheme, that our railways must be connected and made continuous, and we feel satisfied that by one plan or another this will be effected. As to the particular scheme now before the public, there are points of detail yet to be inquired into; but we must nevertheless say we have a strong presentiment that it will be carried out, and shall be disposed, when it is in financial shape, to back our good opinion of it by taking shares.

The railways on the south side of the Thames must be continued to the same point, and there are no insuperable difficulties in the way. We feel perfectly sure that this connection of

the lines will be effected, although as to the "when" there may be doubt. Now, however, is the right time to begin, and we do hope, therefore, that Mr. Pearson's scheme will have the fullest and fairest consideration, and that mere prejudices will not be allowed to weigh against the evidence of facts and figures, if offered.

Within the last few days a printed paper has been circulated, urging the importance of providing for the systematised warehousing of goods on the ground between New Cannon-street and the Thames, with a railway bridge over the river, extended to the South-Western and South-Eastern Railways. We are not certain that this would be the best place for a railway bridge, having the general connection of all the lines in view (a spot nearer St. Paul's would seem to have advantages, and we might clear away the houses on the south side of the Cathedral, and so open the glory of the metropolis to the river), but we mention the proposal to show the direction public opinion is taking.

Mr. Robert Hekeith, architect, has published a plan for the formation of high level streets from St. Paul's-churchyard to Holborn, and Fleet-street.* The street is shown to begin opposite to Hatton-garden, passes behind St. Andrew's Church, through Farringdon-market obliquely, and, crossing Farringdon-street and Old Bailey, opens in St. Paul's-churchyard where Ludgate-street joins it. This would, of course, greatly increase the traffic in St. Paul's-churchyard,—perhaps too much so.

We are glad to see that the City Sewers Commissioners at their last meeting resolved unanimously upon making a fresh application to the Dean and Chapter for the removal of the iron rails around the Cathedral, in order that a portion of the ground may be laid into the public way. The Dean and Chapter have, we believe, already expressed their willingness to negotiate this matter, if the City will buy and pull down No. 1 in the churchyard. Admitting that this is very desirable, should the expense prevent it at this moment, surely the chapter will not say, that because two advantages cannot be had, one shall not be?

Amongst the works of improvement which are certain to go on may be mentioned the completion of Somerset House. All our London readers know the ugly aspect of the west end of this building, and the awkward area in Wellington-street, at the foot of Waterloo-bridge. The new building, designed by Mr. Pennethorne, will face Wellington-street, and will have two projecting wings, which will come out to the line of the street: a porch or portico in the centre will afford a way through, into the quadrangle. The character and details of Chambers's fine building are to be adhered to, and the effect promises to be good. The entrance will be on the level of Wellington-street, and the area beneath will be made use of for dry-stamping. The foundations are already commenced.

In Spitalfields and Shoreditch new roads are commenced, and the market is to be enlarged: new approaches are, we believe, at last to be formed to Victoria Park: notice is given for application for powers for a new park for Finsbury;—and so the cauldron boils and bubbles:—

"Mingle, mingle, mingle,
Mingle you that may."

* Published by Woss, Holborn, 1851.